

**(Washington, DC)** Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following [statement](#) honoring Rachel Wheeler of Lighthouse Point, Florida for her extraordinary contributions to the people of Haiti:

"At 11 years of age, Rachel has succeeded in raising over \$170,000 to build houses in Haiti. She first learned of the nation's extreme poverty two years ago after attending a presentation by Food for the Poor President and CEO Robin Mahfood. Rachel took immediate action and set a goal to build 13 homes, each costing \$2,600. Her campaign included chamber meeting announcements, television news appearances, a webpage, and advocacy throughout her school and neighborhood. Her zeal and devotion were met with widespread support, and she soon expanded her goal to a 25-residence village that includes larger homes. Now, Rachel would like to expand her project to include a school.

"Though Rachel first launched her efforts prior to the earthquake that devastated the nation's capital, Port au Prince, those efforts are now even more invaluable in the tragedy's wake. Having spent much of my career fighting for the people of Haiti, I am both honored and humbled by Rachel's work. She has been able to garner coast-to-coast support and was named one of the country's top ten youth volunteers in the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards competition. We here in Washington can certainly learn from her tenacious spirit, prodigious initiative, and momentous impact. If Rachel can do it, why can't we?

"I am most impressed that despite the fact that this remarkable young lady has accomplished more in her 11 years than many do in their lifetimes, she readily acknowledges that her efforts have only just begun. Rachel's vision and success are a shining example not only to her peers, but to anyone who has ever questioned how much of a difference one individual can truly make."

*Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.*

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